

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Symbolism in Salem

It's difficult to conceive of a piece of legislation richer in symbolism over substance than the ban on coyote-killing contests that the Oregon Senate approved by a 17-12 vote on Wednesday.

The legislation's sponsor, Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, admitted as much when he pointed out that the bill, which now moves to the House, doesn't restrict the killing of coyotes.

The bill bans contests only.

In other words, you can kill as many coyotes as you want, you just can't win any prizes for your prowess.

A reasonable person would assume that a law banning the killing of an animal, even if the ban is limited to specific events, would protect that species.

Not in this case. Coyotes, as anyone knows who has seen one strolling a city street, hardly need the Legislature's help to thrive. Indeed they have defied decades of government-sponsored campaigns, employing a variety of cunning tactics involving poison, that killed vastly more coyotes than any contest ever will.

It's no coincidence that Oregon wildlife laws place no limits on how many coyotes licensed hunters can kill. Coyotes can be killed year-round, as well.

If lawmakers were truly interested in changing attitudes about coyotes they would, rather than pass meaningless laws, focus on publicizing research showing that killing coyotes, with a goal of reducing predation on livestock, might actually worsen the problem because survivors tend to reproduce at a faster rate.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

## Your views

### Disappointed by school district's decision

It was very disappointing to read in Friday's Herald about the addition of a full-time athletic director, to be paid more than \$95,000 a year, to Baker High School. In a time where more and more evidence supports smaller class sizes (also known as more teachers) as one of the best ways to ensure learning, the District has chosen to funnel money to athletics.

This decision by the District is additionally distressing given their recent ask for an enormous sum of money for facilities' improvements. Hiring more teachers, decreasing class sizes, would go a lot further to educate our students than paying administrators' salaries and laying new linoleum.

**Mae Corwin**  
Baker City

## Debating The Boardman-To-Hemingway Power Line Plan

# CON: Proposed line a poorly designed burden on ratepayers

By Lois Barry

I woke up this morning wondering how an Oregon state agency could have approved a plan to convert vacant commercial buildings in Baker City to stables. Two hundred and ninety horses, plus mules and heavy wooden wagons for hauling freight? Think of the congestion, to say nothing of the mess of manure and smell and flies! Granted, if a massive earthquake occurred and I-84 buckled and was unusable, we'd need alternate transportation, but surely there are other ways to plan for an uncertain future? Do we have to go back to the 19th century? Why horses? What about trains, planes? ATVs? Even drones?

Jayson Jacoby's recent article about a state agency supporting the ever-controversial B2H (Boardman to Hemingway) transmission line must have short-circuited my imagination. Fortunately, we're not in imminent danger of horses and mules in downtown Baker City, but we are approaching another bureaucratic slog on the slow march toward Idaho Power's horse and buggy efforts

to build a massive 500 kV transmission line across Northeast Oregon, just like the ones they've been building for more than a hundred years. Recent dramatic changes in energy production, storage and delivery have produced significant changes in electric utility industries, but Idaho Power has consistently ignored them. They've downplayed storage for renewables, discouraged solar net metering and avoided micro-grids.

Mr. Jacoby quotes Mitch Colburn and Jeff Maffucio, two Idaho Power staff challenged with seeing that the B2H is built, whether it's needed or not. That's important, because Idaho Power's shareholders are enthusiastic about their share of \$80 million guaranteed profit on the B2H. Apparently Jacoby did not contact the Bonneville Power Association, one of Idaho Power's two partners in this controversial project. BPA recently decided to drop out of the B2H; they have other more pressing uses for their funds. That's not surprising. Over the past five years, two-thirds of the utilities planning major transmis-

sion lines, including two in Oregon, have abandoned their plans, even though the lines were deemed "essential" right up to the day they were cancelled.

The Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) will meet in Baker City soon. Their mission is to approve the route chosen by Idaho Power, which would slash through Baker County with 290 monster towers, 180 feet high, most on private property, several directly in front of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center. Property values would plummet, wildlife habitat would be compromised, timber lands damaged and the iconic Oregon Trail changed forever. We need to convince the Council that the B2H is a poorly planned \$1.2 billion potential burden on ratepayers.

Attend the EFSC hearings: Wednesday, June 19, Baker City Veterans Memorial Hall, 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Your last chance to be heard. Contact StopB2H.com for information on preparing comments for the hearing.

Lois Barry is a La Grande resident.

# PRO: B2H key to region's future

By Mitch Colburn

Growth has come to the Northwest. The signs are everywhere: new buildings, new roads, more cars, more people. And lights.

It's Idaho Power's job to make sure those lights come on for customers in Oregon and Idaho. Repeated, in-depth studies show we'll need new energy resources to keep doing that. That need could become more urgent as Idaho Power and other energy companies transition away from coal and toward clean energy.

The Boardman to Hemingway line offers the most cost-effective way to meet growing needs and continue Idaho Power's 100-plus-year tradition of reliable, affordable, clean energy. And it will be crucial to our goal of a 100% clean energy mix by 2045, helping us deliver energy from clean, intermittent sources like wind and solar without sacrificing reliability or affordability.

The 300-mile, 500-kilovolt (kV) line will connect a substation near Boardman, Oregon, to another west of Boise, Idaho. It will provide extra capacity to move energy back and forth between the

Pacific Northwest and Mountain West. Utilities in both regions will be able to buy energy when their customers need a little extra. Others can sell what they're not using.

B2H, as the project is called, also would benefit areas that aren't seeing as much growth. It would free up capacity on existing lines so that local businesses can expand or new ones can take root. It would give entrepreneurs an opportunity to connect new energy projects to the grid.

From Boardman to Ontario to Pocatello and beyond, homes, farms and businesses will benefit from this project. Millions of businesses and residents across the Pacific Northwest and Mountain West would receive power from B2H.

The public utilities commissions of Oregon and Idaho — state agencies that regulate utility companies — have acknowledged Idaho Power's long-range plan, of which B2H is a key component.

In Eastern Oregon, B2H would help local governments through tax money the project generates. Local businesses

would benefit from increased spending in the area during construction. More favorable prices and reliable service will be available to electric service providers that buy energy from Bonneville Power Administration, including the Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative and the Umatilla Electric Cooperative in Eastern Oregon.

Idaho Power is committed to minimizing the line's impacts. We're working with the public, local and state governments, federal agencies, private landowners and businesses to finalize the route for the line. Most towers would be about half as tall as a typical wind turbine.

B2H is a key piece of the Northwest's energy and economic future. It will help Idaho Power, PacifiCorp and BPA provide our customers an energy mix that's cleaner, more reliable and more affordable.

Mitch Colburn is Resource Planning and Operations Director for Idaho Power, which is taking the lead on planning and obtaining permits for the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line.

# Paper's sale prompts a pondering of the past

I've drawn a paycheck from Western Communications Inc. for more than half my life, which is the sort of thing that tends to influence a person's attitudes about a company.

And never mind that I signed up for direct deposit years ago and the checks nowadays are made of pixels rather than paper.

After 27 years those documents, in whatever form, will soon be issued by a different company.

This is a milestone.

And as milestones usually do, this one has left me feeling a trifle unsettled, as though the precipice I'm straddling were a real place in the mountains rather than a figurative fulcrum between eras.

I learned Tuesday, along with my colleagues, some of whom have much longer tenures with WesCom than I have, that the Baker City Herald and The Observer in La Grande, under the WesCom banner for half a century, will soon be owned by the EO Media Group.

The company, which was founded in 1908, is, in common with WesCom, a family operation.

Since WesCom announced this spring that it would sell its newspapers, I figured the EO Media Group was a logical buyer.

Most obviously there is geography.

The EO Media Group owns



**JAYSON JACOBY**

newspapers whose circulation areas form a sort of crescent around the Herald's own. The company's publications include the East Oregonian in Pendleton, the Wallowa County Chieftain in Enterprise and the Blue Mountain Eagle in John Day.

But the more important similarity, it seems to me, is that both companies have a legacy, many decades in the making, of ensuring that residents of Eastern Oregon, where the distances are comparatively vast and the sagebrush far more abundant than the media outlets, are as well-informed about their communities as their urban counterparts are about theirs.

This service is no less vital today even as, to briefly revisit my earlier comparison of check types, we report the news digitally as well as via ink pressed onto thin paper.

Heidi Wright, the chief operating officer for the EO Media Group, touched on the topic in a story the company published Tuesday.

"Our owners are committed to keeping local journalism alive in the rural communities we serve,"

Wright said. "We look forward to providing credible and relevant news to the La Grande and Baker City communities for many years to come."

This is, to put it simply, what we do.

And what we have done at the Herald since 1870, which gives us a mere 5-year edge on the East Oregonian in terms of publishing lineage (the newspaper predates the company).

When WesCom announced that it was selling the Herald I was rather more worried about who might buy the paper than about whether anyone would at all.

My fear was that a corporation with no history in Eastern Oregon would be the suitor, and that its leaders would either not understand, or not respect, the relationship between a relatively small, relatively isolated town and its newspaper.

(I use "its" in this context rather than, say, "our," intentionally, as I believe the Herald, after almost a century and a half, is a member of the community rather than an aloof chronicler of events.)

The EO Media Group's history shows that it is the antithesis to the sort of tone-deaf corporate oversight the prospect of which caused me no small trepidation

over the past couple months.

The company's newspapers, I believe, fulfill much the same role that the Herald and The Observer do.

Which would not be the case, I'm certain, were the company's goals dramatically different from what I've come to expect from WesCom over almost three decades in its employ.

This pleases me greatly. I don't expect that I'll need to explain why we run stories about snowpack statistics and their potential effects on alfalfa yields, or why smiling school kids get on the front page often, or why our reporters sit through hours of city council and school board meetings and write about interfund transfers.

It is, if I may be so bold as to paraphrase the great rock lyricist Pete Townshend, a case of meeting a new boss that is much the same as the old boss.

The difference is that Townshend, in the context of The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again," thought this continuity a bad thing.

I believe the opposite.

And yet my excitement about the future is tempered by that curious concoction of the happy and the sad that we call nostalgia.

It saddens me to ponder the

dissolution of WesCom, a company founded by a great newspaperman, Robert Chandler, and one that has done a great service, over the decades, for residents in the sprawling lands of Oregon that lie east of the Cascades.

And it's a company that has done a great deal for me, as I mentioned at the outset.

I'd like to believe, of course, as everyone does who toils for a wage, that I earned those paychecks imprinted with the WesCom logo.

But I recognize too that I wasn't entitled to this job, not when I started in 1992 and not at any time since then.

I'm not so naïve, or sentimental, to suggest that my relationship with WesCom is more deeply personal than it is. Business, as the saying goes, is business. I am an employee, paid to do a job. It's a company that's breaking up, not a nuclear family.

But even financial relationships can be strong ones. Love may indeed define our lives, but money still pays the way, and a regular income, whether it warms the heart, certainly warms the home.

And it gets right chilly around here come December.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.